

## Regional District of Nanaimo

### Summary of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan Review Citizen's Committee Meeting Held on Monday, February 9, 2009 @ 6:30pm At the North Cedar Improvement District Hall 2100 Yellow Point Road

Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm. There were approximately 17 people in attendance including guests.

The Chair, Director Burnett, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **Agenda Item No. 1 – Minutes of the January 12, 2009 Meeting**

The minutes of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan review Citizen's Committee meeting of January 12, 2009 were moved by Henrik Kreiberg and seconded by Bert Vermaskari and were approved with minor grammatical amendments.

#### **Agenda Item No. 2 – Workshop Discussion**

**Greg Keller** opened the discussion on the workshops held January 31, 2009.

The following is a summary of the comments and discussions:

Some felt that the workshops were too long. There needs to be more description on the exercise at the beginning of the workshop. The facilitators require more direction and introduction. The Facilitators need to ensure that everyone's views are heard.

The following Committee Members volunteered to be facilitators for the February 21 workshops:

Ann Fiddick  
Lynnia Clark  
Devon Wyatt  
Joanne McLeod  
Garry Laird  
Bert Vermaskari  
Henrik Kreiberg

#### **Agenda Item No. 3 – Rural Integrity and Rural Character**

**Greg Keller** introduced the topic and opened the floor for discussion on each question below.

- 1. Is allowing for the continued development of small acreages ranging from 2000 m<sup>2</sup> to 2.0 ha primarily intended and used for residential use with little or no agricultural or resource production throughout Electoral Area 'A' an option that will benefit the community and help us to become a leader in local food production and stewards of the environment?*

**Devon Wyatt**, started by explaining that the answer to question 1 depends on what is defined as low density in a rural residential area. He suggested that rural residential offers a different level of services than a city. He also explained that it depends on the previous land circumstances (UCB, farm, floodplain). He stated that some higher density equates to lower tax for the same services because of more people paying for the service. Mr. Wyatt stated that Development must adhere to environmental protection requirements (water supply, septic, bank stability, green space) regardless of where it is located.

**Keith Brown**, indicated that the Map shows that the community has a diversity of areas. Mr. Brown suggested having a Coastal Community designation. He stated that the UCBs may need

to be revised and that we must look at historical communities. Mr. Brown explained that a 1.0 ha minimum lot size is required to meet Vancouver Island Health Authority requirements. Mr. Brown explained that the Agricultural Land commission is the provincial agricultural zone and takes precedents. He stated that there should be notwithstanding legislation recognizing ALC regulations.

**Lynnia Clark**, suggested that there needs to be more people involved to make decisions on changes to land use.

**Mike Hooper**, suggested that other community members would be interested in this discussion and there is a need to reach out to full community.

**Henrik Kreiberg**, explained that the people who participate are only a small part of the community. He also explained that the process is a broad brushed approach. Mr. Kreiberg talked about other areas with densities outside the Urban Containment Boundary and the need to do some groundtruthing of ALR lands.

**Brian Collen**, suggested that we can not look at the area in isolation due to other factors such as Sandstone development and others play into this question.

**Joanne McLeod**, stated that we are lucky we are as rural as we are. She indicated that once it is gone it is gone and further explained that we need to protect the rural integrity and character we have.

**Chris Pagan**, asked is it easier to zone areas that are protected?

**Brian Collen**, stated that there was an RDN bylaw passed recently on groundwater protection. Mr. Collen stated that there is a need to know how much water is available and is being extracted in Area A before development can proceed.

**Greg Keller**, Regional District of Nanaimo Senior Planner explained that the aquifer vulnerability study will contain some higher level information on the aquifers in Area A including a water budget showing water movement and volumes.

**Lynnia Clark**, explained that water use in the NCID is monitored and that they have measures in place for well head protection, and proving supply prior to development.

**Joe Burnett**, stated that our vision is focused on what our area is right now. Everyone is saying we need to maintain what we have.

**Donna Sweeney**, stated that small lot sizes are not going to help us in becoming stewards of the environment nor leaders in food production.

- 2. The community's strategy on managing land use, especially in rural areas could have a positive and/or negative perceived and/or real affect on property values. Land which may have been previously subdividable under existing zoning, may no longer be subdividable if the community's direction is to increase minimum parcel sizes in certain areas to preserve land for agriculture and resource use (preserve landscapes of forests and fields) and preserve*

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*biodiversity. What should we do to address these concerns, while still focusing on achieving 'A Shared Community Vision'?*

**Mike Hooper**, suggested that responses to question 1 cover most of question 2.

**Jill Maibach**, explained that we need to inform people and let them know that the Official Community Plan concerns zoning and parcel size. She explained that we need to keep doing what we are doing and continue to get information out to the community.

**Anne Fiddick**, explained that there is a need for better notification. Ms. Fiddick suggested we do direct mail.

**David Dunaway**, suggested allowing multiple units on larger parcels occupying a smaller footprint.

3. *When we talk about preserving rural integrity and rural values, do we mean maintaining larger parcel sizes to limit subdivision in the rural areas, reduce land fragmentation, preserve natural habitats, and protect our ability to produce food? If so, what should the minimum parcel size be to support agriculture, resource use, and preservation of biodiversity?*

**Brian Collen**, suggested that parcel sizes can be irrelevant and that land use is more important.

**Henrik Kreiberg** provided an example of a community plan for Tuscan Arizona based on the carrying capacity of the land.

**Gary Laird**, stated that if we don't say yes to this question, we don't support the Vision because people who can afford 5 acre lots can't make a living on 5 acres so they are working somewhere else. Mr. Laird suggested 10-20 acres to allow enough size to adequately farm. Mr. Laird also explained that on 5 Acre parcels a lot of area is occupied for roads, power, etc. Mr. Laird indicated that 5 acre parcels leads itself to rural residential use while 10-20 acres allows for more intensive farming, especially for new farmers.

**Joe Burnett**, stated that we need to understand ALC policies. The RDN can say what our desires are, but need to work with ALC. Mr. Burnett stated that we need to be consistent with ALC policies.

**Joanne McLeod**, Suggested that we bring in a speaker from the ALC.

**Keith Brown**, suggested that we leave minimum parcel size determination to the ALC. Mr. Brown suggested that they should be dealing with minimum parcel size. Mr. Brown explained that there is a lack of tools available in planning. Mr. Brown explained that regulations should not be rigid and that lot averaging to allow development on a smaller footprint should be allowed.

**Mike Hooper**, suggested that we will end up with a mix of lot sizes and uses in the area and that lot averaging may allow us to preserve the rural feel.

**Gary Laird**, suggested that we have to be careful in clustering development. He explained that it may be good if a big portion is resource or fallow, but if you put a farm next to small lots, it

may not work in practice. Mr. Laird stated that the attitudes of residential home owners and farmers are quite different.

**Keith Brown**, indicated that lot averaging comes with rules.

**Lynnia Clark**, stated that we need to look at it from an economic perspective. Ms. Clark explained that farming is hard to make a living at. Ms. Clark suggested that we are making too many assumptions that people will want to farm.

**Joanne McLeod**, responded by explaining that the number of organic farmers under the age of 30 is growing.

**Devon Wyatt**, stated that there is talk about resistance to development, but we need to talk about incentives to keep large parcels.

**Gary Laird**, provided an example of a farm in Comox Valley that the owners are trying to sell for \$18 million. Mr. Laird explained that in Saanich there are not many farms left because they can not make a living at it.

4. *If agriculture, resource use, and preservation of biodiversity is to be the primary use for rural areas (areas outside the Urban Containment Boundary), what should we do to encourage and support these uses and also to protect their long-term viability?*

**Gary Laird**, suggested that something needs be done respecting building regulations for farm buildings in the Regional District of Nanaimo. He explained that North Cowichan and RDN regulations are not consistent. He explained that the RDN requires a higher standard resulting in higher costs and longer approval times. Mr. Laird suggested that as a result of the bureaucracy and cost of doing business in the Regional District of Nanaimo, the condition of the farms in area A is worse than in North Cowichan RD.

**Anne Fiddick**, agreed that the regulations should be more streamlined. Ms. Fiddick stated that farmers should not be penalized for owning a large parcel. Ms. Fiddick stated that reassessment makes it difficult for farming.

**David Dunaway**, indicated that Wayne Haddow wrote a letter that spoke about supporting agricultural capable land and not just agricultural land.

**Joanne McLeod**, suggested that consumers should be willing to pay more for food to support the true cost of agriculture.

**Henrik Kreiberg**, stated that if the community wants something, the community needs to support it. Mr. Kreiberg explained that the result has to be that farming is viable.

**Mike Hooper**, suggested that on the biodiversity side, because of population increases, we should consider ecosystem networks to connect forested and natural vegetation networks.

**Stephen Henderson**, explained that on the resource land side, the land should not go towards residential, but we do think that resource land should be used to promote employment and has a role in promoting reductions in greenhouse gases and the use of fossil fuels.

5. *What role should residential use have in the rural areas? How much should be allowed, and where should it go?*

**Stephen Henderson**, suggested that we include in this discussion industrial uses as well. Mr. Henderson explained that some industrial use could lessen the distance to work. Mr. Henderson stated that Island Timberlands has some lands next to Timberlands Road where they are proposing to put in a railway station in conjunction with a proposed development. Mr. Henderson indicated that there may be an opportunity for a business park and warehousing of freight to create employment. Mr. Henderson indicated that the land is not in the ALR. Mr. Henderson indicated that there is an opportunity to get goods on to the tracks.

**David Dunaway**, explained that one of the ideas at the January 31 workshop was to strike a steering committee to discuss where an industrial park would be situated in Electoral Area 'A'.

**Devon Wyatt**, spoke to his concern that property owners remove all the trees from property.

**Donna Sweeney**, explained that some areas have tree cutting bylaws to preserve trees.

**Greg Keller**, explained that in order to do so would require the Regional District of Nanaimo to obtain additional authority from the Ministry of Community Development.

**Bert Vermaskari**, stated that if we want to preserve biodiversity, we need to preserve the trees.

**Mike Hooper**, explained that biodiversity needs to be a mixture of habitats and that fire protection needs to be part of the design.

**Chris Pagan**, asked about the vacancy rates in Cassidy.

**Jill Maibach**, questioned if everyone who has an interest has been represented tonight.

6. *How should we address the demand for rural acreages and how could we make it more desirable to develop within the Urban Containment Boundary?*

**Mike Hooper**, explained that we need to provide land for development in the Urban Containment Boundary.

**David Dunaway**, stated that densifying existing urban areas provides cheapest housing.

**Anne Fiddick**, suggested that in considering minimum parcel sizes we should consider existing services. Ms. Fiddick suggested that light industrial and commercial be supported in Cassidy.

**Brian Collen**, stated that there is higher density in Cassidy and the Duke Point industrial park remains vacant. Mr. Collen stated that we should be infilling existing industrial areas first.

**Lynn Clark**, explained at the time the sewer committee was formed the cost was \$2500 per year for 25 years. Ms. Clark explained that smaller lot size is hard to sell in Cedar because the look of the area is different.

**Bert Vermaskari**, stated that the Duke Point sewage plant was never designed to service Cedar, now we are starting to hook up to it.

**Jill Maibach**, explained that she knows that people don't want higher density but we have to be prepared to change our ways. Ms. Maibach explained that change has to come.

**Lynn Clark**, suggested that we have not sold the concept of higher density in the Urban Containment Boundary.

**Henrik Kreiberg**, suggested the people interested in rural acreages will not be interested in developing in the Urban Containment Boundary.

**Joe Burnett**, mentioned that there are no options for developing in Cedar.

**Zita Hartman**, explained that there are communities like Galliano Island who do not allow subdivision. Ms. Hartman explained if we want that we can do it too.

**Jill Maibach**, explained that this is an opportunity to consider our children and family.

**Gary Laird**, indicated that we are now realizing that some of the wishes are in conflict. Mr. Laird explained that the community may not want higher density, may be looking for rural, and they are concerned about environment and driving, which is in conflict in the direction they say they are not happy with. Mr. Laird suggested that we can not satisfy every wish.

**Donna Sweeney**, indicated that she heard requests for services in Cedar and said we don't have population and don't want the necessary density in Cedar to support it.

**Keith Brown**, using the City of Nanaimo OCP as an example, explained that you can meet some of the community goals so long as you're not in conflict with others. Mr Brown suggested that goals have to be worded such that development has to aspire to goals.

**Anne Fiddick**, indicated her concerns over zoning and is horrified with smart growth examples. Ms. Fiddick stated that the City of Nanaimo is a bad example of planning by putting residential development next to a pulp mill. Ms. Fiddick indicated that there is a need to ensure buffers between farming and residential.

**Jill Maibach**, stated that she thought the smart growth examples were good.

- 7. How should we reduce the impacts of residential development on rural acreages in terms of impervious surfaces, greenhouse gas emissions, land fragmentation, land use conflicts, and ground water quantity and quality?*

**Henrik Kreiberg**, suggested that we need to provide incentives not to pave. Mr. Kreiberg suggested using government programs to reduce GHGs and green Building materials.

**Stephen Henderson**, explained that solutions exist but people don't know where to get information. Mr. Henderson indicated that there is a need for education.

**David Dunaway**, suggested developing a green development checklist and if conditions are met fast track approvals and wave DCCs

**Bert Vermaskari**, indicated that the cost of a solar panel has not gone down. Mr. Vermaskari asked how do we get people involved? Mr. Vermaskari suggested using cost incentives.

**Mike Hooper**, indicated that because this is a planning exercise and we have a huge influence, we can impact GHG by planning where we live and work. Mr. Hooper stated that the OCP should focus on land use.

**Joe Burnett**, suggested we could have a park and ride.

**Keith Brown**, explained that ride sharing is also a problem in the City of Nanaimo. Mr. Brown explained that the City is encouraging multi-family developments to support transit.

**Mike Hooper**, suggested that we can have a high population area like Cassidy that provides employment and ties into rail.

#### **Agenda Item No. 4 – Next Steps**

The meeting was closed at approximately 9:40 pm.

Certified correct by:

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Director Joe Burnett, Committee Chairperson